

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Previously Presented) A process for manufacturing a cold water soluble black leaf tea comprising the steps of

- (a) optionally withering freshly plucked tea leaf,
- (b) macerating the leaves,
- (c) allowing the leaves to ferment,
- (d) firing the leaves to arrest fermentation and
- (e) then drying them to yield black leaf tea,

the process being characterised in that the tea leaves are treated before fermentation or before mid-fermentation with a pH lowering agent, followed by treatment during fermentation by adding ascorbic acid, salts of ascorbic acid or mixtures thereof at mid-fermentation or later in an amount that is sufficient for the black leaf tea to be infusible in water at 5 to 100°C.

Claim 2 (Original) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the pH lowering agent is citric acid, salts of citric acid, malic acid, salts of malic acid or mixtures thereof.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in claim 1 ~~or claim 2~~ wherein the tea leaves are treated with the pH lowering agent during maceration or at the beginning of fermentation.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any preceding claim~~claim 1 wherein the pH lowering agent is citric acid added in an amount of 0.05 to 5% by weight of the tea.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claim 1 to 3~~claim 1 wherein the pH lowering agent is citric acid added in an amount of 0.1 to 4% by weight of the tea.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~claim 1 wherein the pH lowering agent is citric acid added in an amount of 0.1 to 3% by weight of the tea.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any preceding claim~~claim 1 wherein the pH lowering agent is added in the form of a solution in a single or split doses.

Claim 8 (Original) A process as claimed in claim 7 wherein the solution is an aqueous solution.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any preceding claim~~claim 1 wherein the ascorbic acid is added in an amount of 0.1 to 10% by weight of the tea.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 8~~claim 1 wherein the ascorbic acid is added in an amount of 0.1 to 8% by weight of the tea.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 8~~claim 1 wherein the ascorbic acid is added in an amount of 0.1 to 5% by weight of the tea.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any preceding claim~~claim 1 wherein the ascorbic is added in the form of a solution in a single or split doses.

Claim 13 (Original) A process as claimed in claim 12 wherein the solution is an aqueous solution.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any preceding claim~~claim 1 wherein the fermentation lasts for 10 minutes to 3 hours at a temperature in the range 10 to 60°C.

Claim 15 (Original) A process as claimed in claim 1 comprising the steps of

- (a) macerating green tea leaves after optionally withering the tea leaves
- (b) processing the macerated tea leaves in a conventional manner to obtain black tea, wherein the green tea is treated first with 0.1 to 5% by weight of the tea of the pH-lowering agent in single or split doses at any time up to and including the beginning of fermentation, followed by treatment with 0.1 to 10% by weight of the tea of ascorbic acid, salts of ascorbic acid or mixtures thereof in single or split doses from mid-fermentation or later.
- (c) further processing the tea in a conventional manner to obtain black tea.

Claim 16 (Original) A process as claimed in claim 15 wherein the pH lowering agent is citric acid, salts of citric acid or mixtures thereof.

Claim 17 (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any preceding claim~~claim 1 wherein the resulting black tea leaf is heated with microwaves prior to infusion.